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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DHI QAR: AT LAST, A COALITION

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor John Fox for reason 1.4 (d).

11. (SBU) After long negotiations, representatives of the

Dhi Qar branches of the Da'wa/State of Law, National Reform Trend, and the Sadrist Free and Independent People's Trend parties jointly announced they had formed a coalition in the provincial council (PC), dubbed the "Coalition for Dhi Qar" (CDQ). Prospective Council members from each party, which together control 24 seats of the 31-seat council (13 for Da'wa, seven for the Sadrists, and four for the National Reform Trend), shared the stage to announce the coalition. The bland official announcement took pains to stress that the coalition was not aimed at any other party and expressed support for impartial government based on the rule of law. The CDQ spokesman, Hassan al-Saidi, also assured reporters that "repercussions" arising from incidents occurring inside or outside the province would not disrupt the coalition.

Mum on Disqualifications

12. (C) The 12 incoming PC members, including four women, who attended the March 29 announcement ceremony declined to answer questions. The CDQ spokesman, Hassan al-Saidi, declined to confirm or deny whether any elected PC members would be disqualified because they had forged academic credentials to meet the criteria of PC candidacy. An Independent High Electoral Commission official told us on March 25 that IHEC had detected cases of forged credentials and an unspecified number of elected PC members could be disqualified. A well-connected local journalist said shortly thereafter that two to five elected PC members had forged credentials, but this source speculated that the cases, which he said involved Da'wa figures, would be swept under the rug.

Subsequent PRT contacts with IHEC confirmed that no candidates had been disqualified. (Comment: In any case, disqualifications would not change the balance of power, as the next highest vote-getter from the same party would replace the disqualified candidate. End Comment.)

Sadrists Focus on Detainees

13. (C) The announcement of the formation of a coalition also did not specify which parties or people would fill the positions of Governor, Deputy Governor, and PC Chair. The Nasiriyah rumor mill has swung back and forth on this issue with no clear verdict. According to some well-connected sources, the Sadrists now may take one of the three key positions in the provincial government, most likely PC Chair.

However, several contacts said that the Sadrists are mostly focused on the release of Sadrist-affiliated detainees. A March 20 demonstration marking the anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq called for the release of detained Sadrists, positioning the Sadrists to claim credit for any release, of Sadrists and non-Sadrists alike. Several local residents told us that there is little local grassroots pressure to release detainees, but that many Iraqis do view many detentions as arbitrary. In any case, Da'wa and the National Reform Trend together hold a majority of seats, which limits

the Sadrists' leverage.
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